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EULOGY
ON THE
CHARACTER AND SERVICES
OF THE LATE
DANIEL WEBSTER,

PRONOUNCED AT THE REQUEST OF THE

Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia,

JANUARY 18, 1853,

BY WILLIAM H. ALLEN, LL. D.,

PRESIDENT OF THE GIRARD COLLEGE FOR ORPHANS.

PHILADELPHIA:

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1853.

EXTRACT

FROM THE

JOURNAL OF COUNCILS.

Thursday, November 4, 1852.

Mr. Poulson offered the following resolutions:—

Whereas, The principles and opinions which Daniel Webster so nobly advocated and sustained throughout his eventful life, according to his own words, are essential to the preservation of the Union, the maintenance of the Constitution, and the advancement of the country to the highest stages of prosperity and renown:—and these objects have constituted his Pole-star during the whole of his political career, which extended through more than half the period of the existence of the government, and

Whereas, When in the dispensations of His Providence, it is the will of the Almighty Ruler of the Universe to withdraw, by death, from amongst us, and from amidst his career of usefulness, such a man, such a friend, such a gifted lover of his country, as Daniel Webster, we cannot but severely feel and deeply deplore the event as a national affliction: it becomes us to bow in reverential and prayerful submission before Him who gave, and who hath taken away: and

Whereas, In the character and services of Daniel Webster, as a Statesman, and as a Patriot, the people of this country have examples of pure devotion to the public good at home, and of the just preservation of the dignity and honor of his country abroad,—examples, to be cherished and imitated;—and

although the bitterness of grief be upon us for his loss, yet the memory of his deeds will be the more deeply enshrined, and live in brightness in the hearts of his countrymen—encouraging, sustaining, the determination never to depart from those glorious precepts he inculcated and practised alike with the great fathers of this republic, Washington and his associates,—and never forget the lessons taught by such wisdom and experience :

Therefore, Entertaining these sentiments and feelings, the Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia, do

Resolve,

First, That it is expedient and proper, in further testimony of their respect and veneration of the character and services of Daniel Webster, the great expounder of our National Constitution, and the advocate of those principles of government which have secured the unexampled prosperity and happiness of our beloved country,—that, a day be assigned wherein we will devote our minds to the contemplation of the life and labors of Daniel Webster—a blessing to the people—to Daniel Webster's death—a nation's loss;—and they further

Resolve, That a Joint Special Committee, consisting of two members from each Council, be appointed, who are hereby authorized to fix the day for the purpose set forth in the foregoing resolution : to invite a citizen to pronounce on that day, an oration on the character and services of the late Daniel Webster ; and to make such further arrangements as may be deemed suitable and proper in order to effect the objects and purposes of these proceedings.

Which were read twice and passed.

The above preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted at a meeting of Select and Common Councils, held on the 4th day of November, A. D. 1852, and the following Joint Special Committee appointed in accordance therewith : Charles A. Poulson, *Chairman*, Samuel R. Randall, Albert G. Waterman, and Joseph M. Thomas.

(Attest)

CRAIG BIDDLE,
Clerk of Common Council.

COMMITTEE ROOM, CITY HALL,

November 26th, 1852.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN, Esq.

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned on behalf of a Joint Special Committee appointed in pursuance of certain proceedings in Select and Common Councils of the City of Philadelphia, in relation to the death of the lamented Daniel Webster,—a copy of which, contained in a portion of their Journal is herewith enclosed,—respectfully take the liberty of waiting on you, to express their desire, that it may be convenient and agreeable to you to pronounce the eulogy suggested therein, on the character and services of that eminent statesman and benefactor.

We have the honor to be,

•Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

CHARLES A. POULSON,

A. G. WATERMAN,

Sub Committee, &c.

Girard College, November 29, 1852.

GENTLEMEN:—Though deeply conscious that I am not equal to the honorable duty which you have assigned me, I am constrained by a sense of my obligations to yourselves and to the Select and Common Councils which you represent, to comply with the request which you have so courteously made.

I have the honor to remain,

Most truly and respectfully, yours,

WILLIAM H. ALLEN.

To Messrs. CHARLES A. POULSON,

A. G. WATERMAN,

Sub-Committee of Arrangements.

Committee Room, January 20, 1853.

WILLIAM H. ALLEN, Esq.

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned, a Special Committee appointed by Select and Common Councils in furtherance of the objects of a preamble and resolutions passed by Councils on the 4th of November last; have peculiar gratification in requesting from you a copy of the eloquent and appropriate Eulogium, illustrative of the life and character of the lamented Daniel Webster, pronounced by you before Councils, and a large assemblage of our fellow-citizens, on Tuesday, the 18th inst., at the Musical Fund Hall.

The Committee desire to see this eulogy preserved in a permanent form, and especially because an opportunity will thus be presented to all of participating in the pleasure and advantage which was enjoyed by those who were present at its oral enunciation.

We have the honor to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servants,

CHAS. A. POULSON, *Chairman.*

A. G. WATERMAN,

SAMUEL J. RANDALL,

JOSEPH M. THOMAS,

Special Committee of Select and Common Councils.

EULOGY.

THE exit of an unusual number of illustrious men, both at home and abroad, has given a mournful interest to the past year. It was observed long ago, that there are periods of peculiar brilliancy in history, when many distinguished men cluster together; and it would seem that there are also periods of gloom, when the great depart together. In 1832 many bright lights of literature and science went out—Goethe, Spurzheim, Cuvier, Champolion, Crabbe, Walter Scott, Jeremy Bentham and Adam Clarke; and now, at the close of a cycle of twenty years, death has again aimed at shining marks, and has selected this time a constellation of statesmen. Among these, Wellington, Clay, Webster, and Philadelphia's loved and honored Sergeant, stand forth as names of mark—historical men—who have done much to shape the destiny of

nations. And as we saw these stars one after another melt into the light of a brighter hemisphere, until our firmament grew dark, we sadly asked,

“When shall return
Such lustre to the coming years?”

We are here, on the birth-day of one of these men, to commemorate his life and to mourn his death. Though Daniel Webster only passed the limit of three score years and ten, we shall find, if we measure his life by the changes which took place in the world during its term, or by the growth of this country, or by his own public services, that he lived longer than the patriarchs. Born near the close of our revolutionary struggle; nurtured while the fathers of the Republic were laying the foundations of its prosperity in national union; educated during the first trial of the experiment of the new government; called to public life during the second war of independence; holding high posts of duty in seasons of uncommon difficulty and danger, and devoting his ripest powers to the defence of the Constitution and Union, he lived long enough to finish his work, long enough for fame, though not for our hopes, and died a great and not untimely death. While we mourn for him as for a father on whose strength we have leaned, and to whose counsels we have listened, we rejoice in the fruition of his

labors, we glory in the fullness of his fame, and we are proud that the country which produced such a man is our country.

We are here, under the auspices of the municipal government of a city, consecrated by so many recollections of our heroic age, that it has become to the American people the Mecca of their patriotic worship. The Continental Congress, the Declaration, Independence Hall, the Old Bell, the Convention, the Constitution, Morris, Reed, Franklin, Washington, all stand around us, and in their august presence, with their memory and their spirit brooding over us, we are to contemplate the life and services of a statesman who has done much to perpetuate the liberty which was here proclaimed, to preserve the Union which was here established, and to give dignity at home and influence abroad to the government which was here formed.

Few men were ever welcomed to this city with more sincere respect, or more generous admiration than Daniel Webster. When he stood among us in clear light, "*Os, humerosque Deo similis,*" you all know how warmly he was greeted. And when his voice, sonorous and flexible, was heard from platform, balcony, or banquet hall, in language to which his deep, dark eyes, whose glance could fascinate or wither, gave prophetic force, you well remember how,

with suppressed breath and eager ears, we hung upon his lips ; and how, at the close of some sentence big with thought, we sat spell-bound, and forgot to applaud. And now, when that eloquent voice is hushed forever ; and those eyes,

“ Which have been piercing as the mid-day sun
To search the secret treasons of the world,
Are dimmed with death's black veil ;”

and that Atlas form, weary with the weight of public cares, lies mouldering to dust ; and that mind, which seemed too vast even for the vast dome it dwelt in, has returned to God who gave it ; there is no part of our country, except his adopted Boston, where his memory is more cherished, or his death more lamented, than in Philadelphia.

History informs us, that among some of the nations of antiquity, it was the custom, when a great man died, to hold an inquest upon his character ; and if the verdict were favorable, his remains were embalmed with much care and cost, and a solemn eulogy was pronounced at his funeral.

We are not here to-day to hold the inquest, but to unite our voices with the hundreds that have already pronounced the eulogium. The verdict of the contemporaries of Daniel Webster has been agreed upon, and submitted to the court. The members of the pro-

fession of which he was the acknowledged head, have pronounced it. The statesmen of our country, among whom he moved *primus inter pares*, have pronounced it. His political opponents, with a magnanimity which softens the hard thoughts and hard words of party strife, have pronounced it. Scholars and students of history, who have compared Webster with the masters of ancient and modern eloquence, with Demosthenes and Cicero, with Pitt, Fox and Burke, have pronounced it. The pulpit, unseduced by the brilliant and specious, and looking sternly beneath the exterior of public and private character at motives and principles, has pronounced it. And the united voice of the nation, striving to give utterance to the sentiments of its great heart, all alive with fresh recollections of its benefactor's arduous and unrequited labors, has pronounced it. *Daniel Webster was a great lawyer, a great orator, a great statesman, a great man.* What a verdict! from what a jury!

This verdict has been so nearly unanimous, that it will go up with authority to the tribunal of history—that high court of appeal which is to review the record, and by which we doubt not that the judgment of the present age will be affirmed.

What then remains for the present speaker to do? While reading the addresses which have been already delivered on Mr. Webster, in number beyond all for-

mer example, in ability unsurpassed by any compositions of their class in our language, I have shrunk from the honorable duty which the Select and Common Councils have assigned me, so painful has been my consciousness of inability to do justice to the great theme. I can add nothing to the reputation of our departed statesman, for that is more than local, more than national, it is world-wide. I can draw forth from forgotten records no new facts to show by what culture, in life's spring-time, plants of such pith and stature grow; for all these have been explored, and their story is as familiar to you as household words. I can place no stone upon the monument which the master builder has raised for himself; for as the hands of our Zerubbabel "laid the foundation thereof, so have his hands finished it, and have brought forth the headstone, shouting, grace, grace unto it." I can add no syllable to the inscription which his own chisel has sculptured so deeply on that monument, nor grave a single emblem in the blazons of its heraldry. I need not paint again the picture of those home hours, all sunshine, all poetry, when the warrior returned from battle, and put off his harness, and wiped the sweat from his brow, and shook the dust from his garments; when the sportsman sallied forth with gun or line; when the farmer rambled over his broad meadows, and the lowing of his great oxen soothed his chafed spirit;

or when he sat under the elm at evening, and listened to the murmur of the sea, and gazed upward at the stars, and mused on thoughts deeper than the sea, and higher than the stars. They who shared the intimacy of his hearthstone have delineated all these, and have made us know Mr. Webster better, and love him more than before. Still less need I recapitulate his public labors and intellectual achievements; for he was a city set on a hill, and could not be hid.

“Ye saw his deeds.

Why should their praise in verse be sung?

The name that dwells on every tongue

No minstrel needs.”

What then, the question returns with emphasis, are we to do? We may at least pour out our libation upon the tomb of our country's benefactor. We may add one note to the grand requiem, which all over this land, has bewailed a national bereavement. We may mingle our tears once more with those of our stricken countrymen, whose full hearts have attested the sincerity of the nation's grief. We may pass by in solemn procession, and drop one sprig of green upon the coffin of the great master, and place one flower, though quickly it may fade, in the chaplet of his unfading memory.

It has been said that great men are God's gift.

They are more than this ; they are God's agents, sent to the nations for specific objects, and trained up under such discipline as prepares them to accomplish these objects. When we look at the adaptation of means to ends, which is so clearly discernible in every department of nature, and which points ever and from all directions to one great centre—to a presiding and providing Intelligence, we cannot believe that the movements of human society have been left to the guidance of chance. The same God who reigns in nature, reigns also in history. /It cannot be that the Being who has given to the lower orders of animals just such organs and instincts as their condition requires, and who has guided the planets in their courses ever since "the morning stars sang together," would permit the highest order of his earthly creatures to grope blindly on without aim or purpose. We spurn the philosophy that would make humanity the football of accident. We claim for reasoning man at least as high a place in the Divine regard as unreasoning brutes occupy ; and, claiming this, we must believe that historical nations have their work to perform in the world, and are educated for their work ; and that historical men, who alone make nations historical, have also their parts assigned them in the grand drama, and are trained for their parts. In the Divine Mind the work is antece-

dent to the workman, and in due time the workman appears because he is wanted.

The work which was maturing for Mr. Webster, while he was growing up the man for the work, was one of the natural and necessary results of our political development. At the time of his birth, American independence, though not yet formally acknowledged, had been really achieved. But there was another and more difficult task for the patriots of those days. The liberty which had been won by a lover, was to be wedded to a husband. A thing which men worship, fight for, and die for, in its abstract form, was to become a living and prolific force, by being connected with institutions, as the soul is connected with the body. And France, so many times set free, to be as often again enslaved, may tell how much more difficult is the latter than the former.

The Constitution was adopted by the people under the pressure of necessity, and with many misgivings. It was foreseen that delicate questions involving state rights and federal powers must arise under it, and that the complicated machine would not run without friction. What was to be done when state interest, pride or jealousy, roused by an example of real or fancied oppression on the part of the general government, should again apply the maxims of the revolution, and say, "Resistance to tyrants is obedience to God;"

“Give me liberty, or give me death?” What was to be done when a State, having the command of money and physical force, should raise the standard of secession, and say, “Liberty first, and Union afterwards?” These questions are vital. On their solution, whenever they should arise, was to depend the continued existence of the republic.

What manner of man was required to meet such a crisis, and to avert disunion and national suicide?

1. A great lawyer was required; a lawyer who could reason from principles, rather than cases; who could ascend to the fountain of right and justice, to “that law whose seat is the bosom of God, and whose voice is the harmony of the world;” who could pursue the streams which flow from that fountain, as they permeate every department of society, and regulate the intercourse and define the responsibilities both of individuals and nations. He must also be a constitutional lawyer; because the true exposition of the theory of our government was to be made, and the limits of national and state sovereignty were to be carefully defined.

2. A great statesman was required;—a man of settled convictions, not of shifting and temporary expedients; a man who could oppose his party if his party were wrong, and go hand in hand with political opponents when they were right; a man who could compre-

hend the true ends of government, and discover the best means of attaining them. A statesman was required whose point of observation should be sufficiently elevated to bring the entire horizon under his eye; above local and sectional prejudices, "knowing no North, no South, no East, no West"; with a mind capacious enough to embrace the whole country.

3. A great orator was required; for among a people, led as we are by the authority of our great public men, he alone who had the national ear, and could meet an opponent in debate, could effectually put down a popular heresy. He alone who held the key to men's patriotic sympathies, could so marshal the recollections of the past, the interests of the present, and the hopes of the future, as to persuade them. While the love of personal freedom, that master passion of our people, was not to be weakened, patriotism was to be strengthened. The maxims of the revolution were not to become obsolete, but another set of maxims was to be elevated to an equal seat at their side.—"Independence AND Patriotism,"—"Liberty AND Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." Only a great orator could do this.

4. A great man was required. A man of large head and large heart, pursuing noble ends by noble means, whom neither hope nor fear, praise nor censure, friendship nor hatred might seduce from duty and

steadfast right; for only such a man could hold, or would deserve to hold the confidence of the people. A man was wanted to whose skill the nation might trust the most delicate and momentous questions, and think that nothing was too hard for him to solve; and even while the winds were high, and the waves were breaking over the deck, and the rocks were under the lee, could rest secure, and believe

“Nil desperandum, Teucro duce, et auspice Teucro.”

This sketch, rude and imperfect though it be, is not an untruthful outline of Daniel Webster. Where are we to look for him, and how is he to be trained for his vocation?

Such men do not spring forth full grown and armed from the brain of Olympian Jove. They grow slowly by nurture and culture. Accident does not produce them; occasions do not; nor are occasions made for them, but they for occasions. It is an error, now less current than formerly, that fit men are always at hand for every emergency. An emergency may bring out what there is in a man, but will not put anything in him. If men adequate to every crisis are always at hand, why were not the uprisings of the oppressed inhabitants of Europe, in 1848, conducted with moderation and wisdom to the desired issue of liberty? If the want of great men will make them spring up

from the ground, like the fabled crop of soldiers from dragon's teeth, why is their loss regarded as a national calamity? And why is the divine threatening so terrible when the Prophet declares that "The Lord doth take away the stay and the staff, the mighty man, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the eloquent orator?"

The ancients deified fortune, and made her a positive force in human affairs. But now we know that the fortunate man is he who knows himself, and knowing himself, has the sagacity to discover his vocation, and the strength to pursue it wisely and well. The man who was growing up to meet the crisis about to arise in our history, owed very little to fortune. He was born in a small town in New Hampshire, on what was then the extreme northern boundary of civilization. His limbs were inured to toil at an early age, and he was fed with such food as hard labor could extort from a granite soil,—fit nutriment of granite men. His father was of the heroic stock of the Revolution, a man of stalwart frame and robust mind. His mother was of gentler mould, but a woman of sterling sense, discriminating and energetic. She was the first to discover the brave promise of her son, and to predict his future eminence. If all similar

predictions were as fully justified by the results, there would be no dearth of great men.

Both parents of Daniel Webster were religious, and they trained up their children in the rigid discipline of the Puritans. As the boy did not remember the time when he was not able to read the Bible, so the man could not point to a moment of his life when he did not reverence it.

For two or three months in a year he went to such a school as the backwoods of New Hampshire could boast of sixty years since;—a peripatetic school, with no Stagyrte at its head. The few books which fell in his way he read and remembered; and the result proved how much knowledge can be acquired under the most unfavorable auspices, by a mind which attracts it from every object, and absorbs it at every pore. Master Chase soon surrendered the embryo statesman to Master Tappan; and Master Tappan to Preceptor Abbott; the last a fit Aristotle for such an Alexander. At that time many of the youth of Boston were sent up to Exeter to prepare for Cambridge, and it is said that the coarse apparel and unpolished manners of the country lad moved the sneers of his high bred school-mates from the metropolis. But though somewhat abashed at first, he soon outstripped them all in the race of knowledge, and when at the end of his second quarter he was promoted to a higher grade,

his classmates were summoned to bid him adieu, "for," said the teacher, "*you* will never see him again." After leaving Exeter he studied awhile with the Rev. Samuel Woods, and at the age of fifteen was admitted into Dartmouth College, that foster mother of great men.

A tradition used to be current in the New England colleges, that Daniel Webster was what is called among students *a genius*; that is, a lad who reads every thing but his text-books, and who knows every thing except his lessons. I remember, too, that every idle student loved to cite Webster to prove how great a man such a lad may become. Reasoning from example is not always safe, especially when the example happens to be imaginary. I have taken some pains to come at the truth of this matter, and have learned from authentic sources* some facts which I fear will not be very consoling to that class of students who expect to become eminent because they do not study. The facts are these. Daniel Webster studied more, read more, and wrote more than any member of his class. He was constant at his recitations and always well prepared. He was so careful an observer

* The facts and references relating to the student life of Mr. Webster were communicated to me by Professor Edwin D. Sanborn of Dartmouth College, to whose courtesy I am greatly indebted.

of order, that the President of the College would have been suspected of lawless conduct as soon as he.* As a debater and writer he so far excelled all others in his class, that no one was spoken of as second to him.† While his fellow students *selected* their pieces for declamation, he *wrote* his. Whenever there was a difficult task to be performed the class laid it on Webster. So tenacious was his memory that he was known to repeat twenty pages of poetry after reading them carefully twice.‡ He wrote many fugitive pieces, both in prose and verse, which were published. During his Junior year he tested his powers in two kinds of composition and speaking, in which aspirants to rhetorical fame, so often make trial of their strength of wing;—a Fourth of July Oration, and a Eulogy. At the close of the same year he wrote a drama, which, according to the custom of the time, when the buskin and the gown associated together in classic halls, was enacted on the stage at commencement. Above all he was a serious, earnest, truthful lad; distinguished in college for the same traits which afterward made him eminent as a man. When he came to receive his degree, so far from stamping his diploma

* Rev. Elihu Smith, of Pomfret, Vt.

† Governor Henry Hubbard, of Charlestown, N. H.

‡ Dr. Farrar, of Derry, N. H.

under foot, as the story runs, a man now living,* who stood at his side, testifies that he received it with a graceful bow.

The young Bachelor of Arts now goes forth into the world. "*to learn and to earn.*" With habits of economy which necessity has formed; with a self-reliance which successful efforts have nourished; with a courage which no obstacles can daunt; with a perseverance which fears no labor; and with a strength of will which is innate and indomitable, he goes forth "to find, or to make a way."

We next find Daniel Webster Principal of the Fryeburg Academy, in the then District of Maine. His salary is \$350 a year, and as much more as he can add to it by copying deeds at night in the Register's office at twenty-five cents each. With these earnings he is to support himself, and pay the college expenses of his brother Ezekiel. When his fingers ache with copying, he reads Blackstone till his eyes ache. He is usually grave and thoughtful, though sometimes playful and facetious. His religious training has not been lost, and he opens and closes his school with prayer. All his amusements are manly and invigorating, and taken in the open air. The companions of his rambles are a fishing rod and Shakspeare. He

* Rev. Elihu Smith.

is the same man, in all essential qualities, that he will be when nations listen to his words. He is esteemed and beloved as a teacher; and at the end of eight months he leaves Fryeburg, with good testimonials of his skill, and with what he had not always in his later and more prosperous life, some money in his pocket.

Mr. Webster's lawyer life begins in the office of Mr. Thompson of Salisbury, where Coke is placed in his hands "to break him in," or to break him down. But Webster would not be broken down; he chose rather to break through the usual routine of office study, and to read law books which he could understand.

We next meet him in Boston, in the office of Christopher Gore, who is his teacher, friend and adviser. Mr. Gore discovers that his student is fit for something more than to record the doings of others, and saves him from becoming "once a clerk always a clerk." Many a man may look back upon some such turning point of his life as this, when his destiny hung upon the decision of an hour; and many a man, pressed by the *res angusta domi*, has sacrificed a brilliant future to a present necessity. If Daniel Webster had accepted the clerkship which his father urged upon him for the sake of the competency it offered, he would probably have lived a respectable man, influential in his neighborhood, perhaps the great

man of a little village ; but it is doubtful whether his honest neighbors would have ever suspected that the man was greater than his office.

At the age of twenty-three Mr. Webster is admitted to the Suffolk bar. Partly from the difficulties which a young lawyer without influential connexions must encounter in commencing practice in a large city, and partly from a desire to be near his father in his declining age, he returns to New Hampshire and opens an office at Boscawen. Having buried the father whom he went thither to assist and cherish, he removes to Portsmouth and at once enters into successful competition with the best lawyers in the State. In five years he has become known and has made himself respected. He has studied hard, and worked hard, for he has had to measure strength with Titans.

But New Hampshire was becoming too small for him, or rather he was growing too big for New Hampshire. He has to be transplanted to a soil where his roots may strike deeper, and his branches spread out their leaves to a more genial air, and a brighter sunshine. New Hampshire is a fertile grower of great men ; and after exporting a large surplus, she can still afford to give a President to the Union. As the rivers from her granite hills flow down to fertilize Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut ; so her streams of

intellect pour forth with full tide, and spread from the lakes to the gulf, and from ocean to ocean.

It was essential to the development of Mr. Webster as a statesman, that he should establish himself where the party of conservatism was predominant. Massachusetts had this attraction for him, and Boston was ready to receive him with a cordial welcome. In the mean time the ties which bound him to his native State are sundered by the burning of his house, furniture and library. He removes to Boston, where he soon obtains a lucrative practice, and enters upon that branch of his profession which is to open to him his vocation as an expounder and defender of the Constitution. He is retained on the defence of Dartmouth College; and sixteen years after he received his diploma, he appears as the champion of his *Alma Mater* in the Supreme Court of the United States. Every lawyer in America is acquainted with this case, and as the rights of all our colleges and other charitable corporations were suspended upon its issue, the trial was regarded with deep solicitude throughout the country.

It was not enough for the counsel to explore the well-springs of English law. The old principles of jurisprudence relating to eleemosynary corporations, were to be applied to a new system of government. The invasion of corporate rights had been made by

the Government of a State ; and the question involved state rights, the authority of the Federal Judiciary, and the powers of the General Government under the Constitution. Mr. Webster put forth all his strength, and was triumphantly successful. The old charter of the College was sustained. The acts of the Legislature of New Hampshire were declared void, and the institution was restored to its former footing and prosperity.

This case established Mr. Webster's reputation as a constitutional lawyer, and thenceforward he was retained on almost every suit involving constitutional principles.

No one can read his arguments in these cases, particularly in the college case, and in *Gibbons vs. Ogden*, and *Ogden vs. Saunders*, without perceiving that he is pluming himself for those higher flights, in which a broader stretch of wing will be required to sustain him, in his defence of the Charter of the Union.

The small number of Mr. Webster's forensic efforts which have been published, will carry with them to posterity abundant proof that his contemporaries did not over-rate his merits when they pronounced him the best lawyer of his time. His speeches at the trial of the murderers of White, and in defence of Judge Prescott, are not only master-pieces of forensic skill, but they contain passages of unsurpassed eloquence.

In the Girard College case he labored under the disadvantage of not having the law on his side, but his argument is valuable as a defence of christian education, and as the testimony of a great mind in favor of the benefits and blessings of our holy religion. Had he known at the time, that the noble sentiments he was pronouncing, were the very sentiments which would animate the Trustees and Directors of the college, he would have been spared the utterance of those gloomy forebodings, the greater part of which proved imaginary within his own life-time.

The statesman life of Mr. Webster began with his election to Congress as a representative from New Hampshire in 1812, and terminated only at his death. His first movements in public affairs leaned a little towards sectionalism; but he threw no impediments in the way of the government in its prosecution of the war. However strong his attachments to local interests, patriotism prevented his indulging them at the expense of the honor and safety of the country.

After six years of successful practice in Boston, Mr. Webster received the honor of representing in Congress the focus of New England learning and talent. At the call of duty he sacrificed his private interests, and abandoned the prospect of wealth which was opening before him. Henceforth he belongs to his country, and to her service he surrenders himself

with entire devotion. During the session of 1824, he made his speech on the Greek question, and asserted substantially the same doctrines which, a quarter of a century later, he enforced with so much point and pungency in the Hulsemann letter. His words of sympathy for struggling freedom bore encouragement to the suffering Greeks, and are still remembered by the friends of liberty throughout Europe.

To pursue, step by step, the career of Mr. Webster as a legislator and administrative officer belongs to the historian, and not to the eulogist. The limits of this address would be hardly sufficient to give a catalogue of his labors, without any discussion of their merits. When we consider the number and variety of the subjects which engaged his attention, we are amazed at the industry and breadth of mind which could grasp them all. Whether he spoke of currency, banking, revenue, the judiciary, the criminal code, foreign relations, internal improvements, protection of American industry, the removal of the deposits, the presidential protest, the sub-treasury, and above all, of Nullification and the Force Bill, Secession and the Compromises, he was never mastered by his subject, but was always his subject's master. He never failed to throw new light on the question under discussion, to seize its strong points, and to hold them up clearly to the nation. Whatever the matter in

hand, he went right to the bottom of it, brought to view great principles, and clothed them in bold and strong language. They who dissented most earnestly from many of his opinions, admitted the ability and honesty of their advocate.

Mr. Webster first took his seat in the Senate in 1828, and in 1830 he commenced what I regard as pre-eminently the work of his life,—the work for which all that had preceded was but the preparatory training. This was the exposition of the Constitution, and the defence of the Union.

South Carolina was dissatisfied with the protective tariff of 1828, and threatened to nullify the law. Murmurs of discontent, audible during the first term of Gen. Jackson's presidency, rose during his second term to a degree of violence which threatened treason and rebellion. The leaders of that movement were desirous, as a preliminary measure, to destroy the influence of New England and her statesmen. A combination was formed for this purpose; the forces were marshalled, and the parts assigned. Mr. Benton commenced the assault, and Mr. Hayne followed with bitter denunciations of New England measures and men. Mr. Webster replied to the latter. The first speeches of both were but the skirmishing of light troops before the charge of massive columns. Neither party put forth his strength. But in Hayne's

second speech the tug of war commenced, and it was obvious that Greek was to meet Greek. Mr. Webster was not disconcerted by the dashing boldness and brilliancy of the charge. He receives the shot, and is prepared to return it. Next day he rises calm and self-possessed to reply. There is no tremor of a muscle, no blanching of the cheek, no quailing of the eye, but a kindling rather, as when the war-horse hears the trumpet calling to battle, and anticipates the strife and the triumph. Nothing is visible in his face or air, but the confidence of right, and conscious power to maintain it. He surveys the crowded assemblage for a moment with that searching look, with which he was wont to scrutinize an audience, so penetrating that every one present believed it was directed to himself alone. He speaks, slowly at first and with some slight hesitation, but soon rises to the full height of his theme. The keen irony with which he dissects the speech of his opponent, the force with which he exposes the injustice of the assaults upon New England, the running fire of raillery and eloquence with which he makes good his personal defence, are only equalled by the energy with which he pursues and tortures his adversary and hurls back the shafts of wit and sarcasm which few men could use with more effect than he.

The fiery and impetuous assailant had met his master. The granite man had triumphed.

In rhetorical merit I think that the second reply to Hayne will compare favorably with the celebrated oration of Demosthenes on the Crown. Indeed the two speeches are not very unlike in their general drift. The prosecution instituted by Æschines against Ctesiphon, was a blow aimed at Demosthenes; so the assault of Hayne upon New England, was intended to prostrate Webster. In defending his client Demosthenes was obliged to enter into an exposition and defence of his own public life. Webster did the same thing. Demosthenes proved that the measures which Æschines had charged as ruinous to the commonwealth, had been proposed and advocated by Æschines and his friends. Webster proved that the injustice to the West which New England was charged with, would have been actually perpetrated by Southern votes, if New England votes had not prevented. There are passages in both speeches which are not only equal in beauty and grandeur, but similar in conception. And finally, Demosthenes closes with a prayer to the gods to dispose the enemies of his country to better purposes than planning her destruction, to deliver her from impending evils, and to restore the blessings of tranquillity and safety. So Webster, in a prayer more eloquent and sublime, which almost

every American knows by heart, implores the Divine protection upon our Union, and deprecates dissension and civil strife. The arguments of both orators are equally clear and demonstrative, and the results of their efforts equally triumphant. But I submit that Webster has the advantage of the old master of eloquence in maintaining the dignity of a gentleman and the courtesy of debate. He is also more felicitous in turning the weapons of his adversary against himself. Demosthenes indulges too freely in personal abuse, and his vehement denunciation and coarse invective bruise like a maul, while the irony of Webster, and his good natured but provoking raillery cut like a razor.

Three years after this debate the crisis of Nullification came. South Carolina had reduced her peculiar principles to their last result ; but there was to be a war of giants in the Senate before the conflict of physical force should commence in the field. General Jackson had put forth his proclamation, expressing his determination to execute the laws by the military power of the country, and Governor Hayne had issued a counter proclamation answering menace with defiance. Mr. Wilkins had introduced the Force Bill, and Mr. Calhoun had offered a series of resolutions reaffirming the South Carolina doctrines. It was in reply to the speech of the latter, that Mr. Webster made what I

consider the most perfect constitutional argument ever constructed; an argument which overthrows and demolishes every proposition of his opponent, and demonstrates, with a compact and irresistible phalanx of reasoning, the true theory of our government. This speech gave the death blow to nullification; for though it lingered awhile, it was past all medical skill.

Seventeen years afterwards the South Carolina doctrine made its appearance in a new form, which offered the alternative of compromise or secession. Mr. Webster was again in the Senate, and his course on these questions was watched with deep solicitude. Will he, so long a national man, now become sectional? If he will consent to do this, he will gratify a large party in New England; perhaps a majority in discreet and conservative Massachusetts will applaud him. But if he still adhere to a national course, he will be assailed with the bitter taunts of foes, and meet the averted faces of friends. Fanueil Hall will be bolted against him. He will sharpen the ferocity of men who will raven upon his reputation before his corpse shall have become cold in its sepulchre. The choice he makes is the test of his magnanimity. It is only the highest order of men who do not hesitate to act on their convictions at the cost of self-sacrifice. Daniel Webster had counted the cost, and was ready for the sacrifice. His speech of March 7th, 1850, is

dedicated to the people of Massachusetts, with a motto which shows how clearly he foresaw the probable consequences of the step he was taking. "His ego gratiora dictu alia esse scio ; sed me *vera pro gratis* loqui, etsi meum ingenium non moneret, necessitas cogit. Vellem, equidem, vobis placere ; sed multo malo vos salvos esse, qualicumque erga me animo futuri estis."

He holds fast his integrity. He speaks "not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a northern man, but as an American, and as a member of the United States Senate." He believed that the welfare of many generations hung upon the right decision of the questions at issue, and he spoke for the preservation of the Union. After that speech the country breathed more freely, and light broke in through the gloom. The victim was prepared for immolation, and was soon led to the altar. He had tasted the bitterness of office, and was to pay the penalty of greatness. They who imputed his action to unworthy motives, and pretended that there was really no danger of secession, did not know that the trained eye of a mariner can see farther than a landsman. They forgot that the dweller upon a hill-top has a wider horizon than the inhabitant of a valley. They who can see only a part, never comprehend him who can see the whole. As a man of one idea cannot take the measure of him

who has many, so the line of a sectional politician is not long enough to fathom a national statesman.

When Mr. Webster held the post of Secretary of State, under Harrison and Tyler, our foreign relations were delicate and threatening. There were difficulties growing out of the burning of the *Caroline*, and the trial of McLeod. The Northeastern Boundary question, which had defied all attempts at settlement, was to be solved by diplomacy, or cut with the sword. There were controversies both old and new, respecting maritime rights. The limits of Oregon were in dispute. There were difficulties with Spain, with Mexico, and with the Indians. There was no quarter of the political horizon, where the clouds did not look angry. Mr. Webster was not the man to desert his post at an hour like this. The administration had lost the confidence of the party which had raised it to power, and significant hints were thrown out to the Secretary, that he was expected to come away and be separate. These he silenced with a look and a word. When the Mayor of Boston suggested that he was competent to take care of his own honor, he replied that "he was exactly of the same opinion." He remained in the cabinet till the Ashburton Treaty, the great service of his administrative career, was finished ;—a work which averted incalculable mischiefs, and entitled him to the lasting

gratitude of his countrymen. The results of this negotiation proved that

“Beneath the rule of men entirely great
The pen is mightier than the sword.”

The State Papers which Mr. Webster left in the archives of the government will compare favorably, in dignity and ability, with those of his distinguished predecessors in the office of Secretary of State. There are indeed some expressions in the Hulsemann letter, which, as a matter of taste, we may wish had been expunged; and the provoking tone of the paper was better suited to popular sentiment at the time, than to the courtesy and reserve which usually marked the writer's official style. But the letter sets forth true American sentiments and principles with vigor and boldness; and Europe, while she saw that the United States were practising lessons in a style of diplomacy in which they were hereafter to address her ancient monarchies, prayed that we might not indulge in an insolence commensurate with our power. The hint is worthy of consideration, for while

“It is excellent to have a giant's strength,
It is tyrannous to use it like a giant.”

Either through failing health, or want of access to the best sources of information, Mr. Webster made a

mistake on the question of the Lobos Islands, which the government has frankly admitted, and honorably rectified.

With these exceptions I believe there is nothing in the diplomatic correspondence of the great Secretary, of which an American may not say, as they go forth to the world, or down to posterity, "*I, nostra decus.*"

During his active professional and public life Mr. Webster found time to prepare numerous addresses, on subjects not directly connected with law or politics. Among these there are five which may be regarded as models of patriotic eloquence, and noble specimens of literary art. You have all read the Address at Plymouth on Forefather's day, the Eulogy on Adams and Jefferson, the Addresses at the laying of the Corner Stone, and on the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, and the Oration last February before the New York Historical Society. While all of these are rich legacies to our national literature, it appears to me, though I say it with some hesitation, that the first is unsurpassed by any of its successors, and that the last is surpassed by each of the preceding. Mr. March observes, in his sprightly manner, that "every one has read the Plymouth Address who knows how to read and what to read." We may add that it will be read as long as Plymouth rock shall stand, and the English language endure.

Mr. Webster was too constantly engaged in active duties to become a profound scholar, either in general science, or in foreign and ancient literature. His favorite Latin authors were Cicero and Sallust. With these his mind was thoroughly imbued, and formed to think and speak "in the high Roman fashion." He was well read in the English Classics, and his style was disciplined to severe simplicity by intimate communion with the best of them. His knowledge of history was extensive and accurate, but he studied it rather as a practical statesman, for examples and illustrations, than as a philosopher. His literary style was characterized by perspicuity, dignity and energy. As a writer he sometimes reminds us of Demosthenes, and sometimes of Burke; but he had less vehemence than the former, and less copiousness than the latter. In directness of purpose, clearness of statement, and irresistible sweep of argument, he was the equal of Demosthenes; and while Burke used more rhetorical ornament, and abounded more in historical and classical illustrations, Webster was his superior in simplicity and force.

Mr. Webster was fond of poetry, and loved to quote it, both in his speeches and in conversation. It has been already remarked that he paid his court to the Muse of song in early life, and you remember that some verses which he loved, lingered in his memory

when all else of earth was losing its interest, and earth itself was receding from his view. Of imagination he had much; hardly less than Milton, though he cultivated it less; and both drew their nutriment of this faculty from the same sublime source—the Bible. Of fancy, that playful power, which Shakspeare possessed in so eminent a degree, and which, like the *Aurora Borealis*, takes all forms and hues, with bewildering and fantastic inconstancy, he had very little. He never “turned to shape the forms of things unknown, nor gave to airy nothing a local habitation and a name.” His great strength lay in the understanding, and holding imagination subordinate to that, he drew upon its rich wealth with a sparing hand.

In his manner of speaking, Mr. Webster was generally calm and unimpassioned. To hearers who had not the power of concentrated attention, and who could not follow link by link the chain of his argument, he sometimes appeared dull. But when roused by a great occasion, or by an adversary worthy of his power, he rose to his full height, and surpassed expectation. The narrative part of his discourses was always lucid and discriminating. It has been said, that in making a statement of facts he never had a superior; and it is equally true that finding the dividing line between too little and too much in making a

narrative, between the circumstances that will leave the most distinct impression upon an audience, and those that will crowd and confuse the picture, is one of the last attainments of an orator.

His exposition of a subject was equal to his narration. His definitions were like newly struck coins, with sharp outline and bright surface. He never mistook the object at which he ought to aim; nor was it possible for the listener to mistake the object at which he was aiming.

In refutation he rarely used personalities; but when provoked to retort, his irony was as withering as the red flashes of his eye. No man was ever more courteous in debate, but no man ever demolished the arguments of an opponent with more ponderous and effective blows. Nothing but Cyclopean masonry could resist his heavy guns.

As he approached his argument you might see him delving far down beneath the surface till he came to the solid rock on which his structure was to rest. Then course after course, with massive blocks hewn out from the deep quarries of law and reason, he built up his work, every layer supported by all below it, and sustaining all above it, and the whole bound together with bars of iron logic, till the grand result stood finished in the stern simplicity of a Doric temple.

His perorations were beautiful, grand, or sublime,

as the subject might warrant or require. They generally contained sentiments of lofty patriotism, and these were often clothed in language that burned ineffaceable marks into the memory of his hearers. They have been for years the common themes of student declamation, and as almost every educated American youth has personified Webster on the college stage, so almost every one carries with him into life the patriotic sentiments which these noble specimens of eloquence inspire.

It must be admitted that Mr. Webster did not originate any of the leading political movements of his time, but yet his mark is on them all; and he probably did more than any of his contemporaries to shape public opinion on these movements, to instruct the national intellect, and to guide the national will. The man who could do this must have been a great statesman. Though he discovered no new principles of government, and opened no new path for himself or others to walk in, and was content with the maxims of political wisdom which the founders of the Republic had taught, yet he made new applications of the old formulas; he cleared and straightened the old paths; and he gave prominence and force to such of the old maxims as would consecrate the marriage of liberty with law. While, therefore, he was conservative, his conservatism was compatible with progress. It was

a brake to check the engine when its velocity was too great for safety ; but not to stop it. It was not the conservatism of a rock which cannot be moved ; but the conservatism that builds upon a rock a *structure* which cannot be moved. It was the conservatism which makes its piers firm and strong before it springs an arch.

Mr. Webster's consistency was of a piece with his conservatism. There is a thing called consistency, which is only standing still. A ship at anchor may ride secure, from whatever point of the compass the wind may blow. But to make her port she must weigh anchor, and trim her sails to the breeze. Never to change an opinion is never to grow wiser. May not a man consistently advocate a measure this year which he opposed twenty years ago ? When he attains a higher level will he not have a wider view ? When the light increases must he shut his eyes to prevent seeing objects that were invisible before ? Again, the circumstances of the country change, and its wants change with them. A measure may be beneficial to-day, which would have been mischievous yesterday. The only statesmanlike consistency, is consistency in adherence to the eternal principles of justice and truth ;—consistency in the ends pursued ; adaptability, which may sometimes approach mutability, in the means of attaining them.

Such I believe was the consistency of Mr. Webster. He opposed a national bank in 1815 and 16, because he believed that the proposed charter contained elements subversive of all safe banking, and destructive to the credit and usefulness of the institution. But in 1832 he advocated the re-charter, under a modified form, because the bank had, as he believed, demonstrated its utility as a fiscal agent of the government, and a regulator of domestic exchanges. He opposed the first Tariff for protection, because he believed that it would injure New England, and benefit no one. But in 1823, and ever after, he was the friend of moderate protection, because a vast capital, before employed in commerce, had been invested in manufactures, and the interests of industry required a stable policy. Is there inconsistency here? For every change of opinion has he not a warrant to show?

Many in this audience were better acquainted with Mr. Webster, personally, than I was. It therefore becomes me to speak with diffidence of his manners and personal qualities; but I will venture to describe him as he appeared to me from my humble point of observation. I need not tell you that his form and mien were majestic and imperial. You would single him out among assembled thousands as a man of mark. If you had seen him for the first time in the Senate, you would have pointed to him as "the noblest

Roman of them all." His stout, massive frame, modeled for dignity rather than grace, yet graceful in its grand repose, seemed a fitting support for a head of prodigious size. The surgeons tell us that but two of earth's millions, within the memory of living men, had more brain than he. His large dark eyes were set deeply in his head, so deeply that their sockets seemed cavernous, an appearance which was given them by the remarkable prominence of his forehead. His whole exterior indicated a man in whom intellect predominated over all other qualities; and this I believe was the fact. To the friends whose fidelity he had proved, his attachments were strong and unwavering; but he was not easily approached by men who could not show a good title to his confidence. He was kind to those who treated him with deference, and who sought his good offices. His servants, his farm hands, his fishermen, his neighbors, and "that true man, John Taylor," loved him with the devotion of honest and faithful hearts, and he reciprocated the feeling. He was loved by all who had the privilege of seeing and knowing him, when his armor was off; but he moved among men abroad mail clad and with visor down. His affection for his own kith and kin was intense; and their names are embalmed, with his, in the works which he has dedicated to their memory. The poor who sought him never went empty away.

His bounty was large, sometimes excessive, and often indiscriminate. He was careful of dress and etiquette, but careless of money. He was luxurious without ostentation, proud without vanity, ambitious without envy, generous without pretension.

In general intercourse with society there was a striking contrast between Mr. Webster and his illustrious contemporary, Mr. Clay. Webster was usually distant and reserved; Clay, always cordial and sympathizing. Webster conversed brilliantly, but he required to be drawn out. Clay would take the initiative; and he always selected the subject with tact, and a true discernment of the tastes and intelligence of his companions. In fashionable society at Washington, Webster stood in proud repose, with icy brow, like Mont Blanc among lesser Alps, its summit covered with perpetual snow. He was among them, but not of them. Clay, on the contrary, had the facility to adapt himself to every situation. He could shine as brilliantly in the saloon as in the Senate. Webster would enter the party of a Secretary or Minister, move slowly to one side of the room, and sit down silent and abstracted. After a while a few friends would gather around him, and the conversation, at first sluggish and cold, would gradually become instructive, sometimes warm into eloquence, but seldom grow light and lively. Clay would address himself

to the ladies, engage in their conversation or amusement, and vie with the lightest of them in gaiety ; with the liveliest, in vivacity ; and with the brightest, in wit. Thus Clay was always the most popular man in Washington society ; a distinction which Webster never attained and never sought.

Similar differences between the two were observable in their public and official intercourse with men. Webster made firm friends of the few, but held the many at a distance. He was courteous to all, but cordial only to those who had the key to his heart, and knew how to turn it. Clay made friends of all who approached him. Many who voted against him as a politician, loved him as a man, Webster inspired respect, but he was inscrutable. When you grasped the warm hand of Clay, you could look through the windows of his eyes right down into his heart and see it beat. Webster awed men ; Clay attracted them. They admired Webster ; they loved Clay.

In their treatment of great questions, the difference between Clay and Webster was as striking as in their manners. It reminds us of the contrast drawn by a writer some years since, in a style somewhat exaggerated, between Canning and Brougham. Clay swept lightly over the surface, seized the obvious points, and adorned his subject with all the graces of

